



Testimony of Carol Scully
Director of Advocacy, The Arc of Connecticut, Inc.
LCO No. 5753 H.B. 6883 An Act Concerning Students With Developmental Disabilities

March 14, 2023

Members of the Education Committee: Co-Chair Representative Currey, Co-Chair Senator McCorry, Vice Chair Representative Leeper, Vice Chair Senator Winfield, Ranking Member Representative McCarty, Ranking Member Senator Berthel, Representative Arzeno, Representative Bolinski, Representative Brown, Representative Candelaria, Representative Carney, Representative Chaleski, Representative Comey, Representative Cook, Representative Cooley, Representative Dauphinais, Representative Felipe, Senator Flexer, Representative Foncello, Representative Genga, Representative Gibson, Representative Haines, Senator Harding, Representative Howard, Representative D. Johnson, Representative Johnson, Representative Kennedy, Representative Khan, Senator Kushner, Senator Maroney, Representative Marra, Representative McGee, Senator Miller, Representative Napoli, Representative Paris, Representative Poulos, Representative Reddington-Hughes, Representative Roberts, Representative Sanchez, Senator Seminara, Representative Smith, Representative Welander, Representative Zupkus:

The Arc Connecticut is the oldest and the largest community-based organization advocating for and with people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) and their families. We work tirelessly to uphold our vision that every individual and family living with I/DD has access to the information, advocacy, and skills they need to support their full inclusion and participation in the community throughout their lifetimes.

We are a chapter of The Arc of The United States, which has 675 chapters in 49 states and over 5,000 service locations. Nationwide, we have approximately 7,000 board members, 124,000 staff, 46,000 volunteers and collectively we serve more than 1 million people with I/DD and their family members.

In Connecticut, our 14 Arc local chapters deliver over \$100 million in jobs, supports and services to thousands of people in 162 communities. Nonprofit providers including the Arcs are the largest provider of supports and services for people with I/DD and their families in the state, providing about 96% of the services.

The Arc of Connecticut supports H.B. 6883 that proposes changes in special education for students with developmental disabilities.

One change that can truly make a difference in the future success of students with developmental disabilities is to establish an Office of Transition Services and an Office of Mediation Services with the Department of Education. This much needed office will help to ensure students with developmental disabilities including students with intellectual disabilities and autism are receiving access to transition services that are the foundations of their future and that will help determine their success as an adult. Many students with developmental disabilities and their families face difficulties when trying to access transition services. Some school districts don't have trained transition coordinators to help students and their families navigate the transition process and provide critical resources.

Students with developmental disabilities need access to transition programs that utilize Age-Appropriate Transition Assessments (AATA) tools, incorporate students vision and better employment skills assessment evaluations. cursory assessments of student employment skills often don't reveal what the

students abilities are nor do they allow for students to “try out” different jobs through internships or visits to companies.

Often there is no recourse for students and parents who experienced substandard transition programs or lack of a program coordinator in their district.

Increasing the age that a student can receive special education to twenty-two aligns Connecticut’s special education to meet federal IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act). The Arc of Connecticut is in full support of this change to special education.

Parents that are Limited English Proficient (LEP) face more barriers to supporting their child with developmental disabilities in school. The lack of access to information in their native language is directly tied to the parent’s seemingly lack of support for their child in school. How can a parent support their child if they can’t read the information sent home from their child’s school. The U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights ensures English Learners (EL) and their parents equal access. This provision would further align Connecticut statutes to federal protections.

In a 1970 memorandum from the U.S. Department of Education says in part:

“School districts have the responsibility to adequately notify national origin – minority group parents of school activities which are called to the attention of other parents. Such notice in order (sic) to be adequate may have to be provided in a language other than English.

Additional, the Arc of Connecticut supports the new requirement for coordination with programs that provide programs for adults when a student turns 14; the requirement for a plain language resource explaining the process for hearing complaints and the decisions made from the complaint hearings. This would make the process more transparent for students and their families. The requirement for the Department of Education to conduct random audits of special education programs statewide will bring much needed oversight to special education programs statewide. Anecdotally - parents have reached out to The Arc of Connecticut to ask for assistance and resources when their child has been removed from special education programs or denied curriculum for their child who is being homeschooled.

Lastly, The Arc of Connecticut supports the development of educator-in-service training for educators providing transition services to students on the laws governing planning and placement team meetings and additionally, we request that the laws are made accessible to both students, their parents, and guardians.

The Arc of Connecticut urges legislators to pass this important bill that would increase equity and access to special education in Connecticut.

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